

Amendments to the Claims:

The listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1. (currently amended) A supply chain management method implemented by a processor, a storage device, a communications interface, and user terminals or computers, the method comprising the steps of:

(a) the processor generating a fresh unique reference for an item a new product at the start of its life in a supply chain, said unique reference incorporating a component derived from the physical location of origin of the item, and said reference has multiple components, each successive component being unique in the context of the preceding component;

(b) for every transaction involving the item, transmitting transaction data via the communications interface, generating a transaction record for each operation performed with the product for a supply chain, each transaction record including the associated unique reference of the item and storing the transaction record in the storage device without change;

(c) if the item is modified, performing steps (a) and (b) above for a spawned item derived from the modified item, the modified item being a parent item and the spawned item being a child item, linking in the storage device the unique reference of the child item with the unique reference of the parent item; and terminating the unique reference when the product reaches the end of the configured supply chain by preventing recordal of further transaction records for it; and

(d) when an item terminates in the supply chain, (d) if the product is modified in the supply chain, terminating the unique reference by preventing generation recordal of further transaction records for the for it, generating a unique reference of the item for the modified product, and performing steps (a) to (c) for the modified product.

2 – 4 (cancelled)

5. (currently amended) The A method as claimed in claim 1[4], wherein the unique reference method includes a unique identifier for each of a plurality of locations for a plurality of manufacturing or supply organizations.

6. (cancelled)

7. (currently amended) The A method as claimed in claim 1, wherein splitting of an item comprising a collection of sub-items ~~a collection of items such as splitting of a pallet~~ is treated as modification of the original item product.

8. (currently amended) The A method as claimed in claim 7, wherein such modification spawns a plurality of fresh unique references, each for a sub-division of the original item product.

9. (currently amended) The A method as claimed in claim 1, wherein the method validates generation of a fresh unique reference by comparing measure units of the modified item product with those of the source item product, and generates an error message if they are different.

10. (currently amended) The A method as claimed in claim 1, wherein a transaction type identifier is included with each transaction record.

11. (currently amended) The A method as claimed in claim 1, wherein a transaction type identifier for the transaction which generates the item product is included as a component in the unique reference.

12. (currently amended) The A method as claimed in claim 1, wherein each transaction record comprises a unique transaction identifier.

13. (currently amended) The A method as claimed in claim 1, wherein a transaction record includes a plurality of unique references, each for an item ~~a product~~ involved in the transaction, such as combining two products in a manufacturing operation.

14. (currently amended) The A method as claimed in claim 1[3], wherein some locations have an associated unit of measure and an error message is generated if different measure data is received for a location.

15. (original) A supply chain management system comprising means for performing a method as claimed in claim 1.

16. (original) A computer program product comprising software code for performing a method of claim 1, when executing on a digital computer.